

IMAGINATION IN A CHILDHOOD ASPIRATION*

Stan Landfair

Standing in the hallway, the young boy squares off his stance in a line perpendicular to the wall. He breathes a heavy sigh, bends forward at the waist, bends his knees slightly, and with a poised and graceful motion swings a stick effortlessly forward. Twice, and once more, he repeats the routine, settling at last into a tense, cocked position, his hands holding the stick slightly below his right shoulder, well in front of his body. One more sigh he breathes before he turns his head down and to his left, focusing attention deep within the full-length mirror on the wall.

And in his mind's eye, he grows: the skinny ribs and shoulders are now full, emanating from them an aura of carnal power. The sneakers, torn and dirty, are now of shiny black leather, and eighteen metal spikes dig into the dirt. With dignity the blue and white pin-striped flannels cover his thick, steel thighs and torso. Over his heart is a dark blue crest—NY. Walls no longer surround him, for he feels and smells the crisp October air, and views the well-groomed grass, the white chalk lines, and, in a hazy unfocused periphery, a myriad of faces. Yet all transposes in an instant, such that the deep concentration is unaffected. And this masque remains reality until after a mighty swing, a crack of hickory against horsehide, and the sight of a shrinking white pellet soaring far from view. With the boy's self-conscious shrug of the shoulders and his sheepish smile, the illusion disappears.